

Towers, trees on collision course

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MANTECA -- City workers plan to remove about 45 trees planted under power lines in Sierra Creek Park as well as nearly 100 trees along Louise Avenue, city officials said.

The 45 or so magnolias, sycamores and various other trees planted in Sierra Creek Park may grow too close to the power lines hanging above them and need removing, said Ed Maze, the city's parks planning manager and city arborist.

The trees were planted a couple of years ago and now stand at least 6 feet tall but could grow up to 80 feet, he said. The power lines are about 50 to 60 feet above the ground, Maze said.

A Pacific Gas and Electric Co. worker noticed the type of trees growing under the power lines, he said, leading the utility company to contact the city.

About 200 trees are in the park, which runs along Snowcap Drive between Deerpark Drive and Pestana Avenue, he said. Maze said the trees were planted under the power lines before the park was built.

"The power lines were already there. They were just not indicated on the plans," he said. "And nobody caught that until (the trees) were already in."

The city will remove the trees in November, when the weather is cooler and they start to shed their leaves and go dormant, he said.

"They're not actively growing at that time so they won't have as much root damage," Maze said. "They won't be in such shock,"

Workers will be able to save nearly all of the trees and plant them in the same park or nearby at Diamond Oaks or Eastport parks, he said. The new trees, crepe myrtles and trident maples, will only grow 20 to 25 feet, Maze said, and will cost from \$40 to \$45 per tree.

Sam Roberts, who lives across the street from the park, said whoever planted the trees should have known they would grow too close to the power lines.

"I would think that somebody who does this for a living should know," he said as his 11-year-old son tossed a football to a friend in the front yard. "We're going to pay for that. That's our tax dollars."

The trees planted on Louise Avenue between Union Road and Main Street had roots that grew too close to the surface, Maze said.

The roots were causing the sidewalk to rise a few inches in certain places, and some people complained of tripping, he said.

"They were the wrong trees in the wrong place," Maze said.

Within the next month, city workers will replace magnolia and Canary Island pine trees with red maples and swamp myrtles, he said, which have roots that grow deeper into the ground. The trees being removed will be used as mulch for future gardening projects, Maze said.

The tree roots are too damaged by the removal to be replanted, he said. Also, some of the trees were unhealthy and probably never recovered from freezing temperatures a decade ago, he said.

Workers are in the process of repairing irrigation pipes underneath the sidewalk, said Jim Stone, deputy director of public works. The Louise Avenue project is expected to cost about \$78,000 for tree removal and replacement, pipe repairs and sidewalk repair, he said.

Stone said the city was probably unaware the tree roots would grow so shallowly when they were planted nearly 20 years ago.

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